SEP 15 1947
Durham, N. C.

THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Vol. IX—No. 1 LEHIGH UNIVERSITY — BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA September, 1947

Report on the Rocky Mountain M.L.A. and C.E.A.

During the spring and summer of this year plans have been made in the Rocky Mountain states (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming) for regional organizations of both the Modern Language Association and the College English Association. Letters of inquiry by Dr. F. M. Kercheville (Modern Languages), University of New Mexico, were addressed to members of the M. L. A. living in the area. On May 10, Dr. T. M. Pearce (English), University of New Mexico, carried the proposal to the members of The Colorado-Wyoming Academy of Letters. In addition, Dr. Pearce sent out questionnaire ballots to members in the departments of English and Modern Languages in many of the institutions of higher learning in the Rocky Mountain states. Before organizational work began, it was recognized that members of the M. L. A. and C. E. A. were already affiliated with certain regional groups, such as The Colorado-Wyoming Academy of Letters, the Pacific Coast Philological Association and The South Central M. L. A. Voting by means of the questionnaire ballot, members of the national organizations, the M. L. A. and the C. E. A., voted in the proportion of four to one for the regional organizations. Members of The Colorado-Wyoming Academy of Letters showed a fifty per-cent vote for retaining the present organization, yet voting in the proportion of two to one for regional groups of the M. L. A. and the C. E. A., in addition to the Academy.

Since such strong support has been registered for the organization, the group at the University of New Mexico herewith extends an invitation to the first meeting of the Rocky Mountain M. L. A. and C. E. A. on November 28 and 29 in Albuquerque. The following tentative outline of a program has been drawn up:

Friday, November 28, 1947

11 a.m., Registration, Student Union Building.

12 m., Luncheon Group (Dialect Society, Folklore Societies, M. L. A., C. E. A., etc.)
La Placita, Old Albuquerque.

2-3:30 p.m., Three sections, meeting to hear research papers: English Research Papers, Before 1800, Chairman, to be selected; Nineteenth Century and Contemporary, Chairman, to be selected; Modern Language Research papers, Chairman, to be selected.

3:30-5:00 p.m., General Meeting: Topic—Graduate Study in the Rocky Mountain States. Chairman, to be selected.

7:00 p.m., Banquet—Invited Speakers.

Saturday, November 29, 1947

9:00-11:00 a.m., Undergraduate and Graduate Teaching Problems: High School Curricula? Do the Humanities Humanize? The College Sophomore Literature Program?

11:00 a.m., Business Meeting. Elections of Steering Committees, Officers, Group planning.

12 m., The Conference officially closes.

Further announcements will come after the two steering committees have proceeded with their planning. We invite correspondence, nominations for membership, suggestions as to procedure and planning. The one important fact is that our regional conference is being planned and will be held. With the support of the membership of the group, it can be the beginning of the finest type of pedagogic, scholarly, and fraternal association.

T. M. Pearce
F. M. Kercheville
O. W. Arms
R. M. Duncan
For the New Mexico Sponsoring Committee.

Further Change of Venue

The Executive Secretary will move to Brooklyn College in September. After September 15, his official address will be Room 2300, Boylan Hall, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, New York. All C.E.A. correspondence should be sent to him at that address.

OUTSIDE COMMENTS ON THE PH.D.

In the discussion of Ph.D. study it may be desirable to consider what becomes of our doctors after they graduate. Convenient data are in E. V. Hollis' **Toward Improving Ph.D. Programs**, a study prepared for the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education in 1945.

Dr. Hollis finds that Ph.D. graduates in English stick more closely to academic employment than do graduates of any other department. Of 1381 English doctors graduated in the decade of 1930-40, only 2.9% were found in non-academic employment in September, 1940. The corresponding average in all departments was 27%. (Next to us among the agoraphobes were other linguists—Germanic 3.2%, French 3.2%, classical 3.8%. No others ran under 6%, and the philosophers had 18.8% in the outside world.) About 85% of our doctors were in higher education, about 5% in other education, and 7% were unemployed or unknown.

One plausible deduction from these statistics is that our method of training does not prepare graduates to compete for jobs off the campus. Apparently the sociable technique of Communication and the attractive art of Literature in which our students are immersed do not make them socially and economically desirable.

But even within academic halls there are increasing protests against the 90% of our graduates who remain in educational jobs. Even if we let the rest of the world go by and concentrate on training 85% of our graduates to train 85% of their graduates in the Ph.D. lockstep, we still can't avoid growing complaints from campus administrators and fellow teachers.

Experiments and revisions in higher education have been numerous in recent years, and the changes have been chiefly in the direction of broader training. One might mention, for instance, the compulsory distribution of the first two college years, which requires students to sample various fields, the increasing number of

(Continued on page two)

As Others See Us

(Developing a useful literacy in their students is an acknowledged aim of all English departments, but there is little agreement on methods or results, particularly with the general student or with the professional student. To gather informed outside opinion on what English departments have done and can do for these students, the editor asked a friendly officer of a large corporation for an appraisal. He in turn solicited comment from officers directly in charge of departments which are heavily staffed with college graduates. The three statements below, by three separate observers, are presented anonymously by request. The editor will be glad to forward any comments to the authors.)

1. Muddled Writing

In my experience many college-trained men do not know how to present the results of their work in straightforward readable reports. All too often the purposes, observations and results of days of experimentation are obscured by the indifferent organization and irrelevant detail of muddled writing.

The individual is probably not so much to be blamed as the system of education. Many technical graduates have never had thorough training in the techniques of technical or other exposition. Consequently they must either train themselves after graduation or be under a handicap in the competition for advancement in industry.

Perhaps the primary deficiency in technical report writing is lack of organization. Instead of starting with simple statements of purpose, and progressing through a clear sequence of developments to a reasonable conclusion, the report is too frequently an involved chronology, with fragments of several lines of investigation competing for recognition. The writers generally show some training in grammar and sentence structure, but an ignorance of the fundamental structure of the technical report.

A second major deficiency [illegible]

(Continued on page five)

THE NEWS LETTER

Editor
ROBERT T. FUITZHUGH

Editor Emeritus
BURGES JOHNSON

Associate Editor
J. GORDON EAKER, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, New Jersey

Published Nine Times a Year at
BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA
for the
COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

President
ODELL SHEPARD

Vice-President
GEORGE F. REYNOLDS
University of Colorado

Vice-President
HELEN C. WHITE, Wisconsin

Executive Secretary
ROBERT T. FITZHUGH
Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pa.

Treasurer
JESS H. JACKSON
William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

DIRECTORS
(Term ends in December of year named)

A. P. Hudson, Univ. of N. Carolina	(1947)
Herbert L. Creek, Purdue Univ.	(1948)
Howard Lowry, College of Wooster	(1948)
Ross Taylor, Univ. of Wichita	(1948)
E. K. Brown, Univ. of Chicago	(1949)
Henry S. Cambly, Yale University	(1949)
S. M. Pitcher, State Univ. of Iowa	(1949)
T. M. Pearce, Univ. of New Mexico	(1950)
Theodore Spencer, Harvard Univ.	(1950)
Mark Van Doren, Columbia Univ.	(1950)

Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, $2.00 a year. Subscription for Libraries, $1.50.

Snob Appeal . . .

The English staff always lunched at the same table and they ignored unwary interlopers with bland politeness. One day when the faculty room was crowded, a graceless son of science brazenly inserted himself into the group, nodded, and ordered his meal. The conversation poured over him: students were hopeless, they read magazines, they saw movies, they wrote ill, they appreciated not, they understood not, they cared less. In a lull, waiting to be served, the pariah spoke, "What's the matter with English, anyway? Seems to me it's doing what it's supposed to and doing it fine. Why all this bellyaching that it doesn't get results? It isn't supposed to get results. Students don't take it for results. They take it for snob appeal. They want to know something about the better authors. Everybody's got to have culture these days, don't they? And another thing; you pinkos and free-wheeling cynics give students a laugh.

"It doesn't really make much difference what you make them read, either. If it's dull, you explain it, and if it's lively, you interpret the life out of it. It seems queer to them, but that's part of the culture prescription, so they just take it. Even if you make them work writing papers and like that, they think it's pretty wonderful. Good for the old ego. They don't understand what they're doing, but nobody else does either. And I guess all this stuff about English really developing the whole man and showing him how to live is all right too. Most people I know want to get so they can spend as much time as possible being as useless as possible. You guys are useless in a way that takes brains, what with your poetry that nobody can make any sense of, and your bibliography, and your two-bit articles.

"And somebody said that English takes the place of the classics now. You know what Leacock said about the classics? 'They are primitive literature, they're in the same class as primitive machinery and primitive medicine.' America for progress, that's what. Well, here's my lunch at last." Not until he had eaten hurriedly and left did the talk again become general and spirited.

Outside Comments . . .

(Continued from page one)

interdepartmental courses embracing areas and "civilizations," and the ideas of general education and comprehensive examinations.

In addition, engineering and other technical schools are demanding more and better courses in the humanities. Junior colleges are asking for special services. In adult education all sorts of new calls come in connection with radio, educational movies, laborers' institutes, expanding library services, and literary therapy for men at war and sick persons in hospitals. The dissatisfaction of high school teachers even with M. A. work is an old story; they need information on teaching composition and speech, coaching plays, sponsoring a paper, etc., but all they get is literary history.

Let me cite just two examples of these complaints, both of them coming not from dissatisfied individuals but from committees of large, critical organizations. For the past eleven years the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education (SPEE) has been studying its English instrucion and issuing reports from time to time. In June, 1940, the **Journal of Engineering Education** devoted its whole issue to "Instruction in English in Engineering Colleges."

I quote a few typical comments. "A number of heads of departments feel that training as far as the master's degree is ample. . . . Beyond that, experience in journalism or business will prove more helpful than research for a doctorate. . . . A Ph.D. does not qualify a man to teach engineers. After the M A., the prospective teacher should have additional work in public speaking, journalism, the history of science, logic, art, and music, and bibliography. . . . The complaint that the graduate schools fail to train teachers of composition is perhaps the one most often and most vigorously expressed. . . . Men trained in the graduate schools are certainly unsatisfactory."

A second set of criticisms comes from administrators of junior colleges, that are springing up all over the land. This too is an official complaint, made by the Committee on Teacher Preparation of the American Association of Junior Colleges, and printed in the **Junior College Journal**, May, 1943, and May, 1944.

I quote briefly from the latter article, entitled "Shortcomings in the Preparation of Instructors." "Preparation is too frequently of a narrow and specialized nature. . . . More criticism seems to be levelled against young instructors in this field [English] than in any other. . . . Less insistence might be laid on the historical study of English literature. . . . Actually much of our traditional Ph.D. training is not needed, it is even detrimental to the junior college instructor."

Apparently the non-academic world doesn't find use for more than 2.9% of our graduates, and the academic world increasingly finds them narrow and inadequate. Yet, as recent articles in this journal indicate, we English teachers are far from united in the changes that some of us advocate.

In this situation, would it not be sensible to imitate President Eliot of Harvard? Confronted by all sorts of invaders—new natural sciences, new social sciences, modern literatures—into the medieval curriculum, he allowed almost free choice to his undergraduates. Could we not find an essential core of English studies, consuming perhaps one year of graduate work, and then let students elect their remaining time in whatever integrated courses they choose? As in Dr. Eliot's case, time would eventually prove the importance of some studies, and the elective system could gradually be reduced.

In establishing a core of required studies, there would have to be two considerations. First, we should include careful study of the greatest works of English and foreign literatures, which have not been studied normally in undergraduate courses. This would not necessitate a vote on the hundred best books, but it would mean abandoning the chronological Beowulf-to-Benet method. It would mean dropping the heavy chains that we forge (some very obvious forgeries) to connect literary works.

Second, we should see that the students become acquainted with the various kinds of literary study. In March, 1938, Mr. Clarence Gohdes contributed an interesting article to the **English Journal**, suggesting that five short studies be substituted for the lengthy doctoral dissertation. The tasks were to be: evaluating differing previous studies on some topic; editing a short work; publishing a piece of original research; doing a short creative piece; and writing a critical essay on some contemporary whose position is not fixed. If these five assignments don't cover all normal methods of literary study, others could be added, and all could be imposed conveniently as class assignments or term papers.

With knowledge of some of the greatest classics and with experience in the different kinds of conventional literary study as their English core, our students could then broaden their knowledge by electives in other fields. Obviously, these extra studies would often have to be in undergraduate rather than graduate classes, and some, like the art or business of printing, might not be in a classroom at all. College examiners would probably go crazy evaluating this material. But given such a broad training, it seems probable that more than 2.9% of our English doctors would be fit to make their way in the great world beyond the book-stacks.

W. L. Werner
Penna. State College

May News Letters for the following members have been returned. Will they please send the editor their permanent changes of address?

Alice C. Babcock	Ralph B. Long
George W. Bowman	Norman W. Macleod
Francis E. Bowman	Fraser Neiman
May D. Bush	L. G. Painter
Benjamin Boyce	Naomi Pekmizian
Ruth Carter	Robert A. Pratt
Frances B. Chase	David W. Reed
Zilpha Colee	Donald J. Rulfs
Mary Joan Donahue	Bernard Stambler
James S. Douglas	Minnie Lee Sumrow
George A. Dunlap	Cleveland A. Thomas
Milton Ellis	Grace A. Thomas
George A. Gulette	Ralph M. Wardle
Frederick L. Gwynn	H. Adelbert White

Addresses also requested for:

Clarence P. Baker	Carson C. Hamilton
William J. Boardman	Paul A. Harwood
Clark M. Emery	Kenneth Scholes

Composition - Teaching: A Note on Progress

To those English teachers who believe that high school and college composition has not been the complete failure that some of its critics have asserted, I offer the following note of encouragement.

In my own "I've been reading" department, I have been perusing, belatedly, Burton Rascoe's autobiography, "Before I Forget," and I found these sentences illuminating, commenting upon his experiences with Freshman Composition at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1911:

"When I entered the school, all of us freshmen, on the first day of class, including certified entrants, were required to write a composition overnight telling why we had come to the University. . . .

"I was informed two days later that I had been given credit for English I. I was informed also that I was one of two in the large class of freshmen who would not be required to take English I. Passing grade marks in English I and English II were primary requirements of the University in the matter of obtaining a bachelor's degree.

"That first composition we were required to write was imposed to determine the degree of illiteracy among high-school and secondary-school graduates with which the faculty would have to cope. The degree of illiteracy in that freshman class of which I was a member must have been appalling: 90 per cent of the class were not allowed to take English I; they had to spend a semester at the University High School to learn how to spell common words, use sentences with subject and predicate and know the difference between a full stop and a comma. After that they were permitted to re-enter the class of English I and hope to pass it and English II in order to enroll as students of medicine, law, theology or pedagogy or to go out into the great world . . . certified with a sheepskin as being 'bachelors of arts,' 'bachelors of science' or 'bachelors of philosophy.'."

I have seen no statistics, even from state-supported colleges which usually admit applicants on the basis of a high school diploma, indicating that 90% of entering college freshmen in the 1940 decade are inadequately prepared in composition. In extreme cases the percentage may be as high as forty or fifty—but it is worth remembering that many more than the select few of forty years ago are now enrolled as college students.

George S. Wykoff
Purdue University

Will members please continue to send in comments on English and English teaching which they come across in their reading. — Editor.

A correspondent from Texas writes:

"I do not care to maintain membership in C. E. A. It is out of my range, geographically, and to some extent intellectually."

The General Literature Course at Evansville Col.

"Why does a mechanical engineer need to study literature," he challenged. Long experience had taught me the answer. "There is no reason why a mechanical engineer should study literature. If you think of yourself as a mechanical engineer, you need concern yourself only with the mechanics of engineering. If you will ask me why a human being should study literature, I shall try to tell you. But first you must learn to think of yourself as a human being."

I find myself in close agreement with Dean Ashton(1) when he says that students should study literature, "so that they may develop some feeling for the qualities of human nature and the problems of life." The values of literature are primarily human values; they are expressed in human qualities. Professor H. M. Jones uses the phrase "images of virtue."

Dean Ashton says, "For the student in the general literature course, the history of literature has no really defensible place at all." I concur. For too long we have suffered the blight of PhDism. Let us stop rattling the dry bones of literary history and make an honest effort to teach literature as a living art whose aim is to arouse a keener awareness, more sensitive response, wider sympathies, deeper understanding, more discriminating taste, more satisfying enjoyment. The library is closer to the studio than to the laboratory.

We are, I suspect, suffering from what Dean Ashton calls "snob appeal" when we try to make our students memorize the names and titles which constitute acceptable chit chat in the ladies lit'ry circles. I can recognize no valid reason why students should be required to remember the names of the authors of a lot of books that they won't read. The only comparable nonsense is, I suspect, the "ground covering" complex of the surveyors. Professor Earl Ward has a deft witticism for this. He says, "Our purpose is not to see how much we can cover, but how much we can uncover."

My first experience in general literature was a great books course. We studied some undeniable masterpieces of literature: THE ODYSSEY, OEDIPUS REX, THE INFERNO, DON QUIXOTE, WAR & PEACE, CRIME & PUNISHMENT, JEAN CHRISTOPHE, MAN'S FATE. Our mistake was, in Dean Ashton's words, that "our selection of works to be studied was not based upon any really defensible conception of the general student's background, his capacity for understanding literature, or his general interest."

My next experience was with an anthology of world literature. I counted 539 titles in the table of contents. I speak with some feeling when I endorse Dean Ashton's

(1) Dean John W. Ashton, Indiana University. Professor Shockley's remarks were a discussion of a paper by Dean Ashton read at the Spring meeting of the Indiana College English Association.

Preface to Critical Reading

Richard D. Altick
Ohii State University

This new text will prove invaluable to the teacher of freshman courses in more ways than one. Not only does the lively treatment of literary evaluation provoke student interest (and often heated classroom discussion) but it teaches the casual reader to develop a critical attitude toward all forms of the written word—and thereby helps him to become more exact and forceful in his own writing.

321 pages 1946 $1.60

HENRY HOLT and CO.
257 FOURTH AVENUE, N. Y. C.

HARPER & BROTHERS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT OF . . . .

HARRY SHAW

(author of a *Complete Course in Freshman English* and other books) AS GENERAL EDITOR IN CHARGE OF ENGLISH AND HUMANITIES TEXTBOOKS IN THE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT.

A GRAMMAR OF PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

By RAYMOND W. PENCE

A new textbook for beginning and advanced courses, which serves as a complete reference for anyone interested in the workings of the English language. The approach is from the simple to the complex. Definitions are first taken up, and are followed by a clear exposition of shifts, absolute constructions, expletives, and ellipses. Explanations of illustrative sentences and the section on diagramming are exceptionally full.

To be published in the fall.

410 pages $3.75 (probable)

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

First adoptions of

DURHAM and DODDS:

British and American Plays, 1830-1945

Include

Princeton ★ Sweet Briar ★ California ★ Arkansas ★ St. Olaf ★ Stanford ★ Rockford ★ Scranton ★ New Jersey State Teachers, Glassboro ★ Mississippi State for Women ★ Walla ★ Richmond ★ Arnold ★ Wayne ★ Washington.

808 pages $4.75

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
114 Fifth Avenue . . . . New York 11

opinion that we should study complete work rather than fragments.

Some sad memories from these two mistakes went into the planning of our present course in general literature at Evansville College. First, we recognize that many of our students, two thirds of whom are veterans, come to us with a level of literary taste not far above the comics and the soap operas. Our selection of books attempts to cope with this by beginning on a level where we can meet our students' minds and emotions. Our course opens with LOST HORIZON, A BELL FOR ADANO, BABBITT. We move to a somewhat higher level with HIROSHIMA, THE GOOD EARTH, FROST'S POEMS. The Big Three at the end of the semester are CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, MAN'S FATE, and HAMLET. Yesterday I discussed with my students the advisability of making changes for next semester. One girl said that she considered everything but HAMLET a waste of time.

Our selection was partly determined by what we could buy for 25 cents. We use eight pocketbooks, two modern library. The tenth volume is THE POCKET READER, which is not studied in class, but thrown in just for fun. Most of my students have read "just for fun" "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," "The Red Pony," "The Turn of the Screw," various other unrequired pieces of good literature.

We made a conscious effort to escape national or geographic limitations. The authors are American, English, French, Russian; settings are the midwest, New England, Tibet, China, Japan, Italy, Russia, and Denmark. Chronology covers three and one-half centuries, but **Hamlet** comes last. We have fiction, poetry, drama— and **Hiroshima.** We have romance, realism, satire, social problems, action, psychological introspection, philosophy. We think that we have too many novels, and are planning some changes. We chose Robert Frost partly because we consider Frost of more appropriate difficulty than, for example, Auden, or Eliot, or Cummings, or Yeats; partly because Frost's subjects and attitudes make him an eminently teachable poet to students who have come to the study of literature emotionally conditioned against poetry.

It is, I think, apparent that we are trying to influence our students' attitudes and ideas. We feel that we should accept our share in the work of training students for social consciousness and responsible citizenship. **Hiroshima** is an excellent example of literary technique. It also illustrates some ethical concepts which we wish to bring to our students. We explore for images of virtue among the Babbitts, the Joppolos, and the Tanimotos.

Since our texts are innocent of the usual apparatus of scholarship, our teaching might interest you. We distribute mimeographed study guides for each book. These consist mostly of questions designed to direct the student's thinking toward what we consider the major problems of evaluation and interpretation. Sections are limited to 40 students, and most of the class time is spent in discussion. After several discussion periods, bibliographies are distributed, and the students go to the library where material has been placed on reserve for additional reading and the preparation of reports. Each student writes a report on some aspect of each book. Selected papers are read and discussed in class.

I think we have a course which pretty well meets Dean Ashton's specifications of ends and means in the general course in literature.

Martin S. Shockley
Evansville College,
Evansville, Indiana

Junior Members

Members who interested in developing Junior Groups are invited to correspond with the Executive Secretary.

Teaching Load: A Reply to Prof. Clough

Writing in the April **News Letter** on teaching load and class size, Professor Wilson O. Clough says, "Both ideally and actually, 12 hours appears to be the standard load for instructors of English. A few fortunate schools may hold to the nine-hour teaching load for freshman composition; and others endeavor to assign at least three hours of the twelve to a class in literature. . . . Ideally, the freshman teacher will handle from 60 to 100 students. Actually, the figure is nearer 80 to 120. . . . Diminishing returns follow upon the attempt to carry more than about 110 students in composition."

If Professor Clough is merely summarizing current practice, I have no quarrel with him; but his use of the word **ideally** troubles me. If, as his statement implies, a 12 hour load means in perhaps a majority of colleges four composition classes and 80 to 120 students, I submit that Professor Clough is confusing ideal teaching assignments and a system of peonage. Ideally, I would say, the assignment ought to be twelve hours one semester, half composition and half literature, and nine hours the next, divided as the proportion of freshmen to sophomores decrees. Practically, I would accept twelve hours each semester—half composition and half literature—as a perhaps necessary compromise.

The fact is that no course demands so much, no course takes so much out of the teacher, as Freshman English. It is not a course in which the instructor can race through the day's paper-grading duties in a couple of hours after lunch and then go out and play eighteen holes of golf; on the contrary, as I conceive the course, it is a severe discipline in reading, writing, and logical thinking. The paper-grading and conference work is tremendous. If the course is properly taught, no less than twelve 500 word papers should be assigned, carefully marked and criticized, and returned to the student, who should then be required to correct his errors and bring the paper to conference at a specified time. If you have fewer than three fifteen-minute conferences, you might as well not have any. You ought to have four.

Now a teacher can teach two composition sections such as I have described and two literature classes without being sucked completely dry by them, though he will be doing a great deal more work than his colleagues in mathematics or history or government. Give him more than two and he begins to compensate — to go through the familiar motions but without putting his best efforts into them. This is especially true after he has been doing the same job for a number of years. Teachers of composition know that it is impossible to go on year after year teaching even nine hours of composition a week. Such assignments leave the teacher neither time nor energy for adding to his capital. Research, wide reading, the pursuit of culture—they would be nice, but the poor teacher is always three or four sets of papers behind. Thus he gets stuck in the rut of composition and presently comes to be regarded as one of the unpromising drudges of the department, often patronized by more fortunate colleagues who do not always realize that the department, not the individual, is to blame.

Diminishing returns from more than 110 composition students? Nonsense. Returns diminish after forty. An assignment of a hundred and ten composition students—a hundred composition students—even eighty composition students—constitutes slave labor and deserves to be denounced for what it is. Only a very young pair of shoulders can bear such a burden

(Continued on page five)

Just published

TWO HUNDRED POEMS

Edited by
Ricardo Quintana

An anthology from the early English ballads to Frost and Spender.

432 pp. $2.60

EXPOSITION:
Technical and Popular

By
Jay Reid Gould
and
Sterling P. Olmsted

Valuable to anyone in any field who must hand in information in written form.

136 pp. $1.75

by Longmans

Rinehart Recommends

MODERN ENGLISH READINGS
Loomis & Clark
1062 pp. $3.00

READINGS IN BIOGRAPHY AND EXPOSITION
Loomis & Clark
546 pp. $2.00

A WORKBOOK FOR ENGLISH COMPOSITION
Ballard & Clifton
120 pp. $1.00

LITERARY MASTERS OF ENGLAND
Bushnell, Fulcher & Taylor
1158 pp. $4.00

THE TECHNIQUE OF COMPOSITION
Taft, McDermott & Jensen
628 pp. $2.00

Rinehart & Company, Inc.
232 Madison Avenue - New York 16, N.Y.

and that not for long. And the owner of the pair of young shoulders, if he has nothing better than such a schedule to look forward to, would do better to throw in the sponge and become a plumber's assistant. He'll be better off financially and spiritually.

C. L. Cline
Chairman, English I Committee
University of Texas

As Others See Us . . .

(Continued from page one)

the standpoint of an industrial organization, is the inability to present technical material in language a layman can understand. Scientific terminology may be explicit but it does not furnish a busy executive with an understandable basis for action.

While poor organization and overzealous use of the scientific vocabulary are the chief stumbling blocks to effective technical writing there are many lesser faults which are all too common. Monotony of sentence structure is one, as well as a predilection for the complex sentence, where clause is piled on clause for fifty words or so. There are irrational changes in tense, split infinitives, banalities and mannerisms. One report is too flowery, another too verbose, a third too personalized. These faults are regrettable not so much that they fail to convey the ideas but because one gets a poor impression of the writer which is reflected in the judgment of the content.

These deficiencies in English usage are readily admitted by the science graduate once they are pointed out and he generally blames his alma mater for inadequate training. His science schedule left too little time for the arts. Most of the English instruction he received related to the writing of letters, themes, essays and short stories, rather than technical reports.

The answer would seem to be the inclusion of more English composition in the science and engineering schedule. This instruction should come early in the course and should be accompanied by the requirement that all scientific written work be in clear and effective English. Unless general faculty co-operation is secured, students will not have their attention focused sufficiently on English as a necessary tool of the technical man.

Dr. H. Colth, in his recent book **So You Want to Be a Chemist**, argued that report writing was more important than calculus to the industrial chemist. Many other well-known research directors have placed a similarly high value on this ability. English for the technical student should certainly occupy a more important place in the college curriculum than at present.

There is one weakness in the above program—it may be that the ability or inability to write good English is largely congenital. The resistance to suggestion and the disinclination of some technical men to correct the once written word support the "hereditary hypothesis."

2. Rambling Reports

The average chemist who joins our technical staff directly from school does not have an opportunity to write any reports for several years. His first assignment consists of doing routine analyses, the results of which are recorded in a note book and reported on forms which require for completion merely the addition of some figures. In my own case, it was six years before I was relieved of bench work and given problems which required written reports. A good deal of the instruction which a person may receive in school could be forgotten in that length of time, especially when the training could not be put into immediate and continuous practice. For this reason, it might not necessarily be fair to place all the blame on colleges when poor technical reports are written by chemists in their early days of report writing. However, I do believe the colleges could do more than they are now doing in aiding the students to write well. A good course in technical report writing should train a person to prepare in outline form, and in the proper sequence, the facts which have been found. From this, a report could be written which would develop in a clear and logical order, the thoughts he wishes to convey. Instruction should also include training in summarizing, because it is frequently necessary to state in a paragraph or two, the important parts of a long report.

Some colleges may teach the fundamentals of report writing. However, they probably do not train the student in the basic principles in such a manner that he retains that knowledge for very long. Also, they probably do not require technical men to take these courses. It frequently happens that men interested in Science have little interest in English, literature, or the arts, and for this reason do not elect these courses. It might prove profitable for students if the colleges would offer good courses in report writing which were compulsory for technical men.

My observation of report writing by our staff is that the men have difficulty in presenting their subject because of limited vocabularies, lack of ability to express themselves concisely yet clearly, and seem unable to emphasize the important parts of their reports in such a manner that they attract attention. Many reports have to be reread in order to sift the important from the unimportant. The foundation of good report writing could undoubtedly be learned in school, but unless a person starts practicing the things he has learned soon after leaving college, his development in report writing must come from self training, with the help of his colleagues, and in some cases, with the help of the organization for which he is working.

I think the greatest short-coming is the lack of ability to concisely give the meat of a report in the opening few sentences in such a way as to intrigue the reader into investigating the details which follow. In most instances, we find the significant statements scattered throughout a report so that it is necessary to wade through a mass of data and pick up the important facts.

Another fault is the lack of ability to assemble data so that the reader can easily follow tabulated information from the intial steps to the final result, so that the conclusions which are drawn in the punch lines are inevitable.

A third fault is that I believe the English language is specific and that words expressing generalities are chosen and their broad meanings throw some doubt on the validity of the conclusion. Tied in with this third criticism is the lack of brevity so that the rambling phrases detract from the importance of the conclusions.

3. Poor Organization

The writing of technical reports, for the most part, is not difficult for scientifically trained personnel until they come to the narrative part of the work. To most scientists, the experiment is the thing, and when it is completed, as a rule, reporting of the work is an uninteresting chore. In addition to this, in our organization most of the personnel who write reports are continually experimenting, and the report writing becomes only an incident or part of a day's routine, frequently being sandwiched in between other work and perhaps at the mercy of constant interruptions.

BURGESS JOHNSON'S autobiographical success, AS MUCH AS I DARE (Ives Washburn Inc., N. Y., $3.50) now in its second printing, is made available to CEA members by special arrangement with the author, at $1.50. Send check directly to the author, mentioning CEA membership. The two volumes AS MUCH AS I DARE and CAMPUS VS CLASSROOM (Ives Washburn Inc.; $3.) will be sent, autographed, for $3.50.

NOW READY

. . . . a thorough revision of

UNIFIED ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Sanders and others

The complete text for Freshman English — with fresh readings, reorganized grammar treatment, new Workbook.

Complete in one volume $3.80
Text without workbook 3.40
Workbook alone ..... .80

F. S. CROFTS & CO.
101 Fifth Ave. New York

5 new important books on writing....

★ Write the Short Short
by Marva Elwood $3.50
Author of Characters Make Your Story

★ Creative Fiction Writing
by Dorothy McCleary $2.50

★ Story Writing
by Edith R. Mirrielees $3.00

★ Writing Juvenile Fiction
by Phyllis A. Whitney

★ Writing Light Verse
by Richard Armour

Send a postcard for our catalogue of important books all fields of writing and fo sample copy of THE WRITER, Pioneer Magazine for Lit Workers.

THE WRITER, Inc.
PUBLISHERS
8 Arlington St. Boston 16, M

In order to more accurately picture for you the status of our present group of qualified chemists, I prepared a brief questionnaire (see below) and requested from them anonymous answers. It appears that of the fourteen technical men in this group qualified to experiment and write reports, three have had no English Composition or other English courses in college; four have had no training or particular practice along similar lines since college. On the other hand, seven of the fourteen in addition to English Composition and other English courses in college, have had Public Speaking, one also had Debate work, and another Dramatics. Seven of the fourteen have, since college, written for publication. Five have instructed or taught either in college, high school, or in the Army.

Of considerable interest are the comments to the last questions which I asked in my questionnaire: "What course in college would have helped you to write a better report?" Almost without exception, all participants said specific training in report writing or other organizational reporting would have helped. Some said that additional English Composition work would help.

Apparently, the difficulty is not in doing the work or gathering the data, but in organizing the composition and arriving at conclusions and recommendations which are sound. In discussing this matter with some of our staff, I believe there are three particular courses in college or high school which would contribute much to training among lines of organizational thought. These are Debating, Journalism, and Public Speaking. I say this from not only personal participation, but from the comments of others. In all three of these endeavors, it is necessary to observe, record, organize, and report.

The scientific or experimental descriptive part of a report is, as a rule, a simple chronological recording. The reduction of all this work and data to a few simple readable paragraphs for presumably non-scientific consumption is the task of our technical-report writers, and that brings me to the last question which I asked: "What gives you the greatest problem in report writing?" Answers, as given are:

1. Estimating the capacity of the probable reader.
2. Organization of facts and figures.
3. The choice of appropriate words.
4. Presenting all the data in a readable manner.
5. Lack of proper surroundings in which to write the report.
6. Tendency towards repetition.
7. Difficulty of conforming to established standardized style.
8. Organization of data for presentation in conclusions.

In spite of the long experience in this field, and the amount of education and training which our men have had, to most of us each problem is a separate and entirely new venture, and cannot be accepted in a routline-like manner. For the most part, the reports have been of good quality. Some may take longer than others for the natural reason that men are individuals, and differ, as such. My personal feeling is that if intelligence, education, and will-to-do are there, the best way for our men to improve in report writing is to write more reports. That is "sweating it out the hard way" but, as in other endeavors, practice and repetition are the only way of overcoming difficulty or developing skills.

Questionnaire

1. In addition to your scientific courses in college, did you take any of the following? Indicate number of years.
   a. English Composition
   b. Other English Courses
   c. Debating
   d. Public Speaking
   e. Dramatics
2. Since college, have you had any formal training or amateur participation in any of the above?
3. Have you written anything which was accepted for publication?
4. Do you consider your report writing to be:
   a. Clear and Concise
   b. Readable
   c. Complete but Rambling or Wordy
   d. Sometimes Obscure of Context
   e. Easy to Organize and Write
   f. Not too Difficult When Once Begun
   g. Hard to Organize
5. What courses in college do you think would have helped you to write a better report?
6. What gives you the greatest problem in the writing of a report?

Useful Literacy

The foregoing comments raise interesting questions. We learn to write by writing, but by writing what? Themes? Or by writing how? In composition classes? How much can we learn when we have no bona fide audience and nothing particular to say? Or when the project is artificial even though the form and development may parallel a real job, such as a business report? Indeed, beyond elementary decencies of agreement, sentence structure, and organization, how much writing can be taught at all? Certainly mere practice isn't enough even for pedestrian competence.

The average composition class examines but the outward and visible symbols of an inward and spiritual grace. How much can instruction improve the essential process of transmuting inchoate impression into communicable statement? It is a mystery of mysteries, a complex of personality, intelligence, and experience. One may "know" without being able to state his knowledge in words, but he cannot "think" or communicate effectively without language. And analysis of a statement gives little help to the writer in improving the process of formulating clear concepts which is the foundation of writing. Perhaps the greatest value of a composition class should be that it awaken writers to the need for constantly associating accurate verbal symbols with experience. Unless one develops this habit, and keeps a hypothetical reader in mind even when he is not writing, he will fumble when he comes to write.

Each sort of writing has its own devices, forms, tricks — short stories, news writing, reports, letters. And these may be analyzed effectively in classes. Courses in special kinds of writing provide good opportunity for improving one's skill in associating objects and events with words and for clarifying concepts. But courses in "writing" do not seem to give much help in developing useful literacy. Might it not be wise after the freshman year to offer only courses in special kinds of writing?

But too much should not be expected of the brief period of training that a college course represents. The result is not like a piece of jewelry which can be locked up in a box, and years later require only a quick polishing. An intelligent and alert student will profit from skilled instruction. But he must teach himself to write. And there is much painful evidence that success and power have no high correlation with useful literacy.—Editor.

A NEW (Third) EDITION of . . . .
by WOODS, WATT, and ANDERSON
Volume I
has just come from the press, an improved edition of a proven survey text. The first two editions have set the pace in this field. The third edition is a further refinement and modernization of the outstanding English Literature survey text.
SCOTT, FORESMAN and CO.

Large Printing
Ready Soon
Contemporary Drama
37 PLAYS
English
Irish
American
European
Ed. Watson & Pressey
$5.40
SCRIBNER'S

REVISED THROUGHOUT
Practice in English Communication
by
ROBERT M. GORRELL
CLARK EMERY
KENNETH NEILL CAMERON
A combined textbook-workbook presenting instruction and practice in the arts of writing, reading, speaking, and listening based upon the premise that effective communication is the product of logical thought. $2.50
Houghton Mifflin Company